

FWP COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET

Meeting Date: December 20, 2012

Agenda Item: North Dakota Sage Grouse Transplant

Division: Wildlife

Action Needed: Endorsement

Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation: 15 minutes

Background: The North Dakota Department of Game and Fish (NDGF) submitted a proposal to FWP requesting translocation of 60 female greater sage grouse over a two year period (30 per year) from Montana to North Dakota. The stated purpose behind this relocation is to augment existing populations to “further long-term conservation of sage-grouse in North Dakota by maintaining a self-sustaining population that is resilient to future disturbances such as WNV or other periodic events such as drought”. North Dakota sage grouse populations occur on the eastern periphery of sage grouse range and are interconnected to Montana populations occurring to the south and east of Baker Montana. NDGF states that populations have declined by 60% since 2007 and expressed concern that the population “has declined to the point that reproduction may not be able to maintain mortality caused by natural events”.

Potential source populations are located 1) immediately west of the North Dakota population in Fallon County 2) to the southwest in Carter County and 3) in Rosebud County to the north of Forsyth. All three source areas are showing similar trends to the North Dakota population. As a result of extreme winter weather, drought conditions and West Nile Virus outbreaks, Montana source populations reached a low point in 2011, dropping to 50-60% below peak populations observed in 2007. Populations began to rebound during 2012. Montana populations are more robust, present over a vastly larger landscapes, and are inter-connected to other populations of sage grouse.

Public Involvement Process & Results: The public comment period on this proposal will extend through 5 PM, Monday, January 28, 2013.

Alternatives and Analysis: The Commission could endorse the proposal as stated or endorse the proposal with adjustments.

Agency Recommendation & Rationale: FWP recommends that the Department begin working with NDGF to analyze the feasibility, protocol, and logistics of a potential sage grouse translocation. Discussions and coordination between the field staffs in both states should begin as soon as feasible.

Proposed Motion: I move to endorse the proposed transplant of sage grouse to North Dakota, as presented by FWP.